

WHAT IS A "LIBERAL"?

A "LIBERAL" SENATOR ANSWERS

CPYRGHT

How does a "liberal" of this day describe himself? What is his real position on big government, freedom, other issues?

A leading spokesman for the "liberal" point of view—Senator Frank Church (Dem.), of Idaho—gives his answers in this article. It was written in reply to an article in the March 25 issue

of "U. S. News & World Report" by Senator Karl E. Mundt (Rep.), of South Dakota, who described today's "liberals" as "twentieth-century Tories."

Senator Church says the "antiliberals" misrepresent the "liberal" view, as part of a "well-oiled political spook show."

by Senator Frank Church, Democrat, of Idaho

Webster says that "liberal" means "not narrow or contracted in mind; broad-minded. Not bound by authority, orthodox tenets, or established forms in political or religious philosophy; independent in opinion; not conservative."

Webster defines "conservative" as "tending or disposed to maintain existing institutions or views; opposed to change or innovation."

This seems clear enough. But American politics has been afflicted of late with a rash of amateur lexicographers. They call themselves "conservatives," and they are bent upon redefining liberalism, to cast it in the villain's role for their well-oiled political spook show, now on the road from coast to coast.

As I listen to their speeches, and read the polemics which they commit to the public print, this is what they seem to be saying liberalism has come to mean:

The do-gooders are at it again. They want the Federal Government to act as wet nurse for the whole population, from the cradle to the grave, insuring that every want is uniformly satisfied, and that the shiftless, the improvident, and the lazy are taken care of at the expense of the steady, the foresighted and the energetic.

They are extracting, through ever-higher taxes, the good citizens' hard-earned money, and they are doling it out to bad citizens. In the process, the Government has become insolvent, the nation has been brought to the brink of bankruptcy, and a monstrous bureaucracy has arisen which engulfs Congress and stretches its tentacles around the 50 States, slowly squeezing them to death. This bureaucracy is dedicated to socialism, determined to

destroy free enterprise and undermine the liberties of the people.

Now, there is little that can be said to those who believe in this nightmare definition of liberalism. But for the benefit of those who would rather pull the sheets off hobgoblins than quail before them, let's take a look at some facts.

To begin, what accounts for the big Government we have in Washington today, and for the relatively high level of federal taxation needed to support it? The federal budget for the coming fiscal year [starting July 1] makes the answer at once evident. Big Government on the Potomac is chiefly the product of the warfare state, not of the welfare state which "liberals" are accused of fostering. More than half the total budget goes directly to the armed forces.

But, before I am accused of telling only half the story, let's turn the federal tax dollar over and have a look at the nonmilitary side. Surprisingly enough, most of the spending once again relates to warfare requirements, past and prospective, not to welfare programs. Our space technology, Atomic Energy and Central Intelligence agencies are all directly linked to our national security. The swollen costs of diplomacy and foreign aid, including military assistance to our allies, also relate to the security needs of the United States.

Add these, along with the continuing cost of our involvement in past wars, veterans' benefits and interest payments on the war debt, to what we spend each year on the armed forces, and the grand total accounts for a staggering 80 per cent of the federal budget. It



—USN&WR Photo

MR. CHURCH: "Big Government is the product of the warfare state, not the welfare state."

... "Government role has expanded to protect public interest"

is these tremendous expenditures which we have had to sustain almost without letup for almost 20 years that mainly account for the big Government in Washington today.

Would the antiliberals apply the meat ax to these expenditures? On the contrary, a recent analysis shows that new or expanded military programs generally supported by "conservatives" could add 6 to 10 billion dollars to the "major national security" sector of the federal budget.

Of your federal tax dollar, the Federal Government spends only 7 cents on all the welfare programs it supports. The attack on liberalism, stripped to its essentials, is really a campaign against these programs, which most "liberals" favor, and most "conservatives" oppose.

What are these welfare programs? They include federal grants-in-aid to the States for aged, blind and disabled citizens, and dependent children; federal grants, usually given on a matching basis, for public health, hospital construction, control of water and sewage pollution, and food-and-drug administration.

Also included are all forms of federal aid to education, federal impact funds, the school-lunch program, vocational rehabilitation, and the special assistance to schools and students made available through the National Defense Education Act—and the costs of administering unemployment compensation, and financing research for medical cures of cancer, heart disease, infantile paralysis, multiple sclerosis, and a host of other diseases of mind and body.

Welfare Spending: Relatively Less

On all of these programs combined, we spend a smaller proportion of our gross national product than we did 25 years ago.

Let's examine another hobgoblin. What about the monstrous federal bureaucracy we hear so much about? Actually, federal employment no longer keeps pace with the growth of the country. In 1952, there were 16 federal employes for every thousand of population. By 1958, this number had dropped to 14, and it will be 13 in fiscal 1964. In the decade from 1952 to 1962, total federal civilian employment fell 3 per cent, while employment by State and local governments increased by 63 per cent. If "creeping socialism" is measured by the rising tide of government employes, the sentinels would do better to station themselves closer to home.

What then of the hobgoblin of fiscal irresponsibility? Right after World War II, our national debt was nearly 130 per cent of our gross national product. Today it is just under 50 per cent. In 1947, the national debt per person was \$1,900; today it is \$1,600. While the total debt of the Federal Government has increased by 15 per cent since 1947, the aggregate debt of State and local governments has increased an astonishing 332 per cent, in the total amount of 56 billion dollars. Private-business debt has increased, in this same period, by 271 billion, reflecting the tremendous expansion in all business activity.

If debt accumulation is the measure of fiscal irresponsibility, as "conservatives" would have us believe, then the Federal Government, managed by "liberals," is coming off far better these days than either State and local government or private business itself, managed largely by "conservatives."

Despite these facts, many nonetheless persist in the notion that big Government has been concentrated in Washington by "liberals" intent upon undermining the States, or, worse still, upon perpetuating themselves in office. These suspicions linger because of our tendency to compare the size and

scope of the Federal Government, in our time, with the limited role originally assigned to it by the Founding Fathers, a role fashioned to suit the life and times of a rural and sparsely populated colonial America.

The men who lived in colonial times could not foresee the sweeping changes the future held in store for their infant country. They could not possibly have envisioned how our lives would be transformed by stampeding science, by mammoth industries and by the burgeoning growth and urbanization of America.

"We Have Adapted to Changing Needs"

The wonder is how the constitutional system they devised has managed to survive such a tremendous transformation. And the answer can only be found in the flexibility with which we have adapted our system to accommodate the changing needs of the people.

The Federal Government has grown up with the country, and its role has expanded in order to protect the public interest in finding satisfactory solutions for the new problems thrust upon us by a highly industrialized payroll economy, dominated by gigantic corporations and equally gigantic labor unions, and increasingly characterized by the interdependence which results from congested urban life.

Today, federal agencies regulate the rates which may be charged by railroads, trucking companies, airlines, electric and gas utilities, and telephone and telegraph companies. Others supervise the use of the airways to assure the orderly transmission of radio and television broadcasts. Still others see that certain drugs are not dispensed without a prescription, and that others are properly labeled, and that the public is not cheated by false advertising claims.

All of these regulatory activities are connected in a certain way with our welfare; none of them presented a problem for local, State, or national government, when the Federal Union was first joined.

Can the air waves be usurped without any kind of regulation in the public interest? If not, can the State of New Jersey stop a broadcast from New York City at the State boundary line? Can the State of Texas insure that consumers of natural gas in Illinois are not overcharged? I suggest these questions answer themselves.

Far from being anxious to extend the range of federal intervention in the general economy, Congress has actually been a most reluctant dragon. Fifteen million people stood in breadlines, in the dark, desperate days of the Great Depression, before Congress at last realized that our economy had outgrown effective local control, and required sufficient national regulation to police the nation's stock exchange, to stabilize the national banks, and to protect the people against the total collapse of the nation's business.

Unemployment compensation, Social Security, minimum-wage-and-hour laws were then made the instruments of reform, as we began the long climb back to recovery.

Our own history is the basis for my contention that the Federal Government has grown bigger, assuming a larger role in the life of the people, not because anyone planned it that way, not in pursuit of any conspiracy to concentrate power on the Potomac, not, indeed, because any body of doctrine required it, but simply because the country grew and changed, problems arose which existing machinery could not solve, and new ways were worked out, usually on a trial-and-error basis, to meet them.

What I am saying is that we have not been doctrinaire, and we have not been afraid to try new things. Some label

... "There is no way to recapture" freedom of the old frontier

could be affixed to it, but pragmatic, looking for the solution most apt to work, whatever it might be.

And I would say that the pragmatic method has served us well. Indeed, I would go further, and offer the judgment that it is a key source of strength and viability in the system we have evolved together for solving the problems of the twentieth century.

Contrast it, if you will, to the approach to problem solving in Communist lands. It is there that dogma rules supreme. There it is supposed that one formula exists which offers the correct answer to every question; it is the fixed and final mold of a perfect society. When new problems arise, solutions are sought by searching the writings of the Communist prophets, and if one faction dislikes what another proposes, they attack it by saying that it is not in accordance with the principles of Marxist-Leninist doctrine. This strait jacket, since it leaves little room for change and adjustment, must eventually be torn asunder by the inevitable pressures of new problems that cannot find solution within the rigid pattern of dogma handed down from an earlier and much different period.

This is why the best minds in the free world are confident that time is on our side in the struggle with Communism, while it is the timid and the troubled among us who seek the comfort of conformity, and want to solve all problems of the present by reciting the ritual slogans of the past; who fear that Communism, being inflexible and disciplined by dogma, will soon overwhelm us.

Taking the Middle Course

You may accept it as the "liberal" view that neither the formulas of the radical "left" nor those of the radical "right" offer us acceptable blueprints for the future. This does not mean that we lack values, as some have rudely charged; it means only that we do not claim to be prophetic. We do not presume to know what the future holds, and so we strive, from day to day, to keep our society open and free, knowing that in this way we can continue to apply the same pragmatic test to the problems of the future as has served us so well in the past.

This brings us to an examination of the last hobgoblin in the political spook-show version of liberalism with which I commenced this discourse, the familiar assertion that the huge federal octopus is crushing our basic freedom. This question ought to be paramount in any appraisal of the larger role the Federal Government has come to play in our society.

Has the expanding activity of the Federal Government infringed upon the freedom of the individual? If by freedom one means the bundle of individual rights guaranteed to each citizen by the Federal Constitution, then there is no evidence to support the charge.

The whole movement of our history has been in the direction of enlarging the bundle: Slavery has been abolished, women's suffrage has been won, the many restrictions that once made voting the privilege of the propertied few have been steadily sloughed away. Indeed, the complaints I get about current decisions of the Supreme Court are not to the effect that the Court is giving too little attention to the rights of the individual, but too much.

Still, there remains a general uneasiness, which all of us feel from time to time, that somehow our freedom is being impaired. Again I suggest this feeling springs from historic roots.

The ideal of freedom which motivated the founders of our Republic was based upon a way of life that has long since

disappeared. The social and economic order they knew and valued was founded on land ownership. They envisioned a society of freeholders, each producing on the land nearly everything he and his family needed, and consuming nearly everything produced. They conceived that the independence, industry, and self-reliance of these farmer-freeholders, supplemented by a small minority of equally independent craftsmen and artisans, would yield a maximum of freedom.

In such a society, there was need for only a minimum of government, which was suspect anyway, owing to the tyranny of the king. The natural attitude was to hold government down, permit no interference with freedom of speech and religion, insure fair and orderly judicial proceedings, keep the tax collector away -- and all will be well. This early concept of freedom remains very much a part of our birthright.

Now, the modern man who works for wages in a factory or an office, or who tractors a big spread of land on which he grows only wheat or potatoes, is both more and less free than the self-sufficient freeholder of the eighteenth century. In some ways, he is a wheel-within-a-wheel-within-a-wheel, pulling the same lever on an assembly line, or bearing the same leather dispatch case, full of papers, which is one of those status symbols of the "organization man." He has come to need many things which his ancestors didn't even know about, and couldn't possibly have imagined. He is hemmed in by laws and regulations, and he pays taxes.

In exchange, his life is longer, fuller, and easier. He is literate, and if he avails himself of the opportunity, he may know the pleasures of good books, good music and good drama. He has leisure time for travel and recreation, and he can readily know much about what goes on in the big world around him. If he is taken sick, there are doctors, nurses, and well-equipped hospitals to care for him.

Wherever he may live, he can easily stay in touch with his parents or grandparents, children or grandchildren. And he is conscious, if he ever stops to think about it, that his fellow men, whether they are engaged in chipping away at the malignant mysteries of cancer, or giving penicillin to the diseased children of Africa, or probing the alien darkness of outer space, are being sustained in part by the product of his labor.

"A Time of Peril and of Promise"

Who is to say whether freedom has been gained or lost through the upheaval of science and industry that has so changed the character of our lives? The form of the free life known to the old frontier is disappearing, and there is no way to recapture it. Of this, I am sure. We stand upon what President Kennedy has chosen to describe as a New Frontier. It is a time of peril and of promise for the human race. Science has given us the tools to either cinderize the earth in the witchfire of nuclear war, or make of it man's footstool to the stars.

God only knows what our fate is to be. But on this earth, He has left our destiny in our hands. We can best prepare for it by facing the future, by recognizing that the "liberal" programs, as we know them today, have been fashioned by the effort of free men to regulate their affairs in response to the needs of the changing times.

Let the process continue, for it cannot be stopped. And let us pray that it will be directed, in the future as it has in the past, by unbogoted and pragmatic men, who have no fear of hobgoblins, and who are dedicated to the everlasting quest of keeping our society open and free. [END]